

AN
INQUIRY
INTO
SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE
PRODUCTION
OF THE FIRST FOLIO OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
in the form of a letter

IMPRINTED AT TORONTO MMV
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DEAR MR BOYLE,

In the lead article in the current issue of *The Ever Reader*, you write, “Another intriguing fact about the whole Folio project that should also be mentioned here is that Jaggard registered 16 of the previously unpublished 18 plays with the Stationers’ Register on November 8th, 1623. This event thus came at the very end of the printing schedule, not the beginning – a most peculiar ordering of priorities. Compare this, for example, with the Ben Jonson folio project in 1615/6, for which the printer registered all the previously unpublished material as the first step in the process, not the last.”

However, according to George Putnam, in *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages* (1897) VOL II, p261, it appears that registration may have been granted regularly *after* printing: “The examiners or censors, whether political or ecclesiastical, were prepared to make their examinations and to arrive at decisions only when the work in question was already in printed form. It was necessary, therefore, that the expenses of the editing, type-setting, and printing should be incurred before the publisher could ascertain whether or not the publication would be permitted.” Entirely reasonable when you consider that examination of the author’s manuscript offered no assurance that the printed text might not conceal seditious or blasphemous revisions or interpolations.

In a letter I wrote several years ago to Peter Moore, examining projected expenses of production for the Folio, I considered this question of comparative periods of registration for Jonson's and Shakespeare's folios, advancing the possibility that registration of Jonson's folio (20 January 1615) may have been entered in fact, in 1616 (*ie*, 1615 old style), judging from the period between licencing of Shakespeare's folio (8 November 1623) and its earliest recorded appearance (5 December 1623) – 28 days. An interval which better accords with the date of 1616 printed on the title-page to the terminal section of *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (primary evidence for dating publication of Jonson's folio in that year), given the preceding insight into registration. R. Crompton Rhodes concurs in his book, *Shakespeare's First Folio: A Tercentenary Study*, 1923, p1, that at the time of its registration, the book was "already in print, and, according to the custom of the time, the first copies would be on sale within two days."

My study looked to assess the liability involved in producing a book the size of the Folio, taking as illustration, the great polyglot Bible of 1571, produced by Chistopher Plantin of Antwerp. Although he was one of the two leading publishers of the day (with Estienne of Geneva), and regularly one of the largest consigners to the annual Frankfort Book Fair, his shop, comprising an impressive 25 presses employing 150 men, was severely threatened by the renege of a subvention of 21,000 florins (\$8,400) from King Philip, promised to underwrite the cost of

production of the Bible. Furthermore, he was prohibited from recovering any of his enormous production costs, from market, for a full year after completion of the edition (1213 copies) while the ecumenical authorities *apparently* dithered over approval of its distribution (Pope Gregory XIII ultimately advancing his imprimatur in 1572). In reality, the task of authenticating the fidelity of a text the size of the Bible's (in several languages), remained a daunting undertaking that might easily consume far more time than a year.

Computing the setting of the type (*cf*, Pollard's estimate in *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates*, 1920, p72, that "the setting of the line would be a work of minutes...") I found, "The Folio's double columns of 66 lines each, composed by a single typesetter (figured in continuous application), demanded 330 twelve-hour days, at two minutes a line; redistribution of type (possibly done by the printer's devil) taking perhaps as long again. Of course this work would have been required intermittently, allowing for the printer to complete 500 pulls per forme [given an edition of 500 copies], both compositor and devil (and perhaps others) occupied in the interim with receiving and hanging fresh sheets, and the folding and collating of dry ones...."

Pollard further points out, "A Shakespeare Quarto could easily have been printed in a month if the printer employed a journeyman and a fairly advanced apprentice..." (p66) – which

roughly extends to three years for 36 plays (supporting my view of the time it may have taken to produce the Folio). I determined that, “printed two-up [*sic*], each impression, allowing for inking, adjustment of frisket and turning down the platen, must have consumed at least three minutes, perhaps as much as five, that is, from 23 to 38 hours per copy of the Folio (in a perfect world), or two to three (12-hour) days each for printing alone.” Or, in other words, from 958 days (2 years 7 months) to 1583 days (4 years 4 months) for 500 copies (although these are consecutive estimates, the work year, with one day off per week, amounting to 313 days, which would extend production using these figures, to a period of 3 to 5 years).

[NOTE: The expression “two-up” properly signifies printing two copies of the same setting at once, where I meant the simultaneous impression of conjugate pages of a single sheet: in the case of the Folio, each copy requiring 454 impressions.]

In other words – as I went on to illustrate in a tabulation of the only 19 collections including even a shred of drama, printed in Britain to just before the time of the civil war (1641), of which but six were issued in folio [eight if you count the second and third volumes of Jonson’s *Workes* separately] – this form of publication for drama, was both extraordinary and extremely labour-intensive, and could hardly have been realized as you presume (in the case of the Jonson folio) in even two years; unless, that is, the added expense of a second press and several additional employees were absorbed. Herford and Simpson

speculate that Jonson may have begun work on his folio as early as 1612 (*The Man and His Work*, 1925, p64) – though the implication that he undertook the venture himself is diluted by the testimony provided by Drummond, that up to 1618 “of all his playes he never gained two hundreth pounds”. As you know, plays were a decidedly popular medium, the sort of thing characteristically issued in handier quarto or octavo form – folio being a somewhat extravagant contingency usually reserved for weightier (and presumably subsidized) texts.

Further, it turns out, Jonson’s and Shakespeare’s were the only two dramatic folios devoted either wholly or predominantly to drama, and were by far the largest of all these folio productions, yet they were also the only two ostensibly by commoners without substantial means to contribute to their production (the other four authors being Philip Sidney, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, and William Alexander, Earl of Sterling – all, significantly, connected to the Herberts). Curious, this lavish of resource and time on so extensive an enterprise, particularly given that, in Jonson’s case, it was effectively a pilot project! The market had never before been tested with a folio of this size [514 leaves] devoted predominantly to drama, by a commoner (Sidney’s *Arcadia*, 1598 – the first dramatic folio in English bibliography [considered so, merely because of a short dramatic “trifle” in its third edition], and the larger of the two preceding ‘dramatic’ folios – hardly approaching its bulk). The full record of dramatic folios to 1641 includes:

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The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia. Now the Third Time Published, with Sundry New Additions. Sir Philip Sidney. 1598, Richard Field for William Ponsonbie. 292 leaves. [followed by seven further editions: 1599, Edinburgh (unauthorized); 1605; 1613; 1621, Dublin – in three states – (expanded with Sir William Alexander’s 1613 completion of the third part of the *Arcadia*); 1628; 1633; and 1638].

The Works of Samuel Daniel Newly Augmented. 1601, Valentine Simmes and William White for Simon Waterson. 194 leaves. [found sometimes with *A Panegyrike Congratulatorie* and other works appended (1603 or later); also with title-page dated 1602. Daniel was William Herbert’s tutor, becoming Inspector of the Children of the Queen’s Revels in 1615, the year Herbert was created Lord Chamberlain].

The Workes of Beniamin Jonson. [1616] William Stansby for Richard Meighen. 514 leaves. [incorporating nine plays, four entertainments, eleven masques, and two collections of poetry; with short quires apparently made up as long as 20 years after publication; a second edition (of 454 leaves, printed by Richard Bishop for Andrew Cooke) appearing in 1640; with two further volumes of Jonson’s works (VOL II comprising 128 leaves printed essentially by John Beale for Richard Meighen; and VOL III comprising 290 leaves printed for Thomas Walkley) issued 1640 and 1641 respectively – though the majority of extant copies, are bound together. Jonson received the welcome grant of an annual pension (of 100 marks, or 66 pounds 13s 4d) in 1616 shortly after

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William Herbert’s investiture as Lord Chamberlain, a pension which was temporarily increased in 1621 (curiously, shortly before production of the Shakespeare folio began), to 200 pounds – or three times the initial munificence! (cf, ‘The First Folio: A Family Affair’ by Ruth Loyd Miller in *Oxfordian Vistas*, VOL II of her indispensable edition of ‘*Shakespeare*’ Identified, 1975, pp1–31).

Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. 1623, Isaac Iaggard [for?] Ed. Blount [and I. Smithweeke and W. Aspley?]. 454 leaves. [containing thirty-six plays, divided into three sections: fourteen comedies, ten histories, and [twelve] tragedies; in three states, the first including only thirty-five plays (omitting *Troilus and Cressida*); followed by a second impression in 1632, printed by Thomas Coates [to whom ‘Dorathye’, the widow of ‘Isaacke’ Jaggard transferred his rights, June 1627 – item 23 (of 24 assigned) realizing a modest 6d] for Robert Allott [to whom Blount had his interest transferred, November 1630 – at 6d per play for 16 plays, or 8 shillings total], John Smethwick, William Aspley, Richard Hawkins, and Richard Meighen; and further followed by two identifiable states bearing title-pages printed on paper usually seen in 1637 and 1640 respectively].

Certaine Learned and Elegant Workes of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke. 1633, Elizabeth Purslowe for Henrye Seyle. 182 leaves, small folio. [Greville, Sidney’s best friend and biographer (who became Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer in 1619) of course, took possession of Oxford’s final

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residence, King's Place, Hackney, three years before the death of Lady Oxford in 1612 (renaming it Brooke House), and remained there until he died in 1628].

The Monarchick Tragedies of Sir William Alexander, Earl of Sterling; Fourth Edition. 1637, Thomas Harper. 301 leaves. [Alexander, poet and tutor to the Prince of Wales, was Secretary of State for Scotland from 1626 until his death in 1640 – effectively ruling the country for Charles; and remains signal to Shakespearian bibliography as the author of the poetic tragedy, *Julius Cæsar*, issued in quarto in 1604, and again in 1607 – although Captain William Jaggard refers to it as a play proper, in his bibliography (1911); with Shakespeare's play *Julius Cæsar*, apparently first printed in the Folio].

All the more remarkable that a dramatic folio the size of Jonson's could appear with Henry Percy, the Wizard Earl, yet in the Tower for his alleged part in the Gunpowder Plot, and Jonson's career at Court in sharp decline after curiously removing to the continent for a somewhat protracted retreat (ostensibly as Carey Raleigh's tutor) very shortly after the fatal solitary performance (November 1611) of his notoriously pointed parallelogram concerning that plot, *Catiline* – a play which “garnered more than twice the allusions throughout the seventeenth century of any other English play (89 compared to 40 for *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's most alluded to play).”

[cf, Barbara DeLuna, *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of Catiline in its Historical Context*, 1967]

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There can be little doubt that these two exceptional folios were political gambits initiated by the Herberts. All the rancor of the age, preserving the sentiments of a restive constituency, with regard to both political and religious ‘positions’ of the Crown (or its ‘ministers’), resound throughout them. They constitute the most compelling record and a highly engaging reminder of objections harboured deep within the conscience of a progressively disenfranchised aristocracy – more effective than any digest of stern legal extracts in summarizing resistance toward the parvenu and the erosion of custom or faith – to ring a resounding concert of conviction among the inherited lords.

Obviously the predominant market for a folio priced even at the lowest figure generally advanced for Shakespeare's (ten shillings: a price supported by an index of half-a-penny per sheet of printed work, derived from the recorded price of the 1609 quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* – 6 pence for 48 leaves, or 12 sheets; and endorsed by George Steevens in 1778: “the folios 1623 and 1632, when first printed, could not have been rated higher than at ten shillings each”), resided, however fitfully, high in this crumbling crust (the average labourer's daily wage, then pegged between 3 and 4 pence; the skilled artisan's, between 5 and 6: *ie*, the Folio requiring between 20 and 40 days common wages to acquire).

The Herberts (and ‘concerned’ relations) were merely following Oxford's lead as propagandist for Elizabeth and the common weal, employing the unforgettable spectacles of those plays

(and Jonson's more contemporary reflections in the increasingly popular medium of the masque) to magnify concerns, and romance the factions to a fury of patriotic concert, before all hope of appeal to an ancient code of courtier conduct might be washed away in the thunder of increasingly compact ambition. The book was in essence an imposing reminder to those in charge, of the loyal primacy of unbartered dignity on which the establishment of England's glorious promise was founded, at a time when the effects of James's avaricious (and shrewd) dilution of the nobility were becoming insufferably palpable.

My figures, arbitrary to some extent though they may be, suggest a cost somewhere in the vicinity of 380 pounds, presumably borne by two major (Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard) and three minor venturers (William Aspley, John Smithweeke, and William Jaggard, who died in October 1623, before the Folio was completed) – if you accept the classic expansion of the division of those names between title-page and colophon; an investment which presumably took nine years to recover (*ie*, the interim between the First and Second Folios). And although the optimal return on an edition of 500 copies at ten shillings, would be just 250 pounds (if sold directly, that is, not through the book trade), or double that at a pound [a price supported from an unknown copy bearing this notation, inspected by George Steevens toward the end of the 18th century: *ie*, conceivably a premium of resale inscribed sometime during the intervening century and a half], this same company, essentially, supposedly undertook to issue the Folio a second time!

[Sir Edward Dering's recorded purchase of two Folios at two pounds, 5 December 1623, apparently designated bound copies, likely in full calf. Captain William Jaggard further supports a price of a pound in his bibliography: "The published price was twenty shillings. This information is kindly supplied by Mr R.C. Jackson (originator of the idea of the Bankside national memorial to Shakespeare at Southwark). He discovered it at Dulwich, on a letter from Wm Cartwright to Edward Alleyn, founder of the College. Cartwright was an intimate friend and guest of Alleyn's from 1617 onwards. The memoriam runs: '*Paid a sover-in for Shaksper's booke of Plaies.*' The letter is dated 30th Nov 1623, the very week of publication." A sovereign, however, was not always a pound: "(3a) A gold coin minted in England from the time of Henry VIII to Charles I, originally of the value of 22s 6d but later worth only 10s or 11s 1503. (3b) A current British gold coin of the value of twenty shillings 1817." OED, p2058. Inexplicably, this reference to the earliest appearance of the Folio, goes uncited in subsequent studies.]

A maximum profit even at a pound a copy, of 120 pounds realized over a nine-year period, shared four ways, on an investment somewhere in the neighbourhood of 380 pounds (when as early as 1571, Parliament had legalized payment of interest up to 10%)..! Makes one wonder just where the incentive lay in repeating the exercise (each venturer – counting the Jaggards together – arguably realizing a grand return of 30 pounds over nine years, or 3 pounds 7 shillings a year, for an average individual share of 95 pounds investment)?!

However, Peter Blayney, making a reasonable distinction between publisher and printers (and considering the others merely stockholders in the venture), projects a unit cost to the publisher, in his Folger exhibition catalogue, *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, 1991, p26, of “6s 8d (about half of which was for the printing, and half for paper and copy)”, and a retail cost, unbound, of 15s per copy (based it would appear, solely on an annotation in a copy owned by one Thomas Longe, “*Pretium 15s*”) – although the publishers’ wholesale cost to members of the Stationers’ Company, he allows, was likely 10s. This amounts to an investment of 167 pounds (for an edition of 500 copies) presenting the prospect for an ideal return (*ie*, if the entire stock were sold directly, at full retail) of 208 pounds profit over a nine-year period, or 23 pounds on average, per year, divided among at least two other venturers (referring to William Aspley, Edward Blount’s neighbour stationer in St Paul’s Churchyard, and John Smethwick, whose shop was in Fleet St, holders of copyright to two and four of the printed plays, respectively). Split evenly, this would net each venturer 7 pounds 13 shillings per year on an aggregate investment of 167 pounds (although obviously Blayney considers Blount as publisher, entitled to the lion’s share). Had the Folio proved a profitable venture for the putative publishers, however, one might reasonably expect them to have commenced production of a reprint as soon as the original edition was near exhaustion, which conclusively points to the likelihood that their hypothetical return should be reckoned to have taken something close to nine years to recover. [For those who need help with the math, 167 pounds

invested at 10% interest compounded over 9 years, returns a relatively effortless profit of 226 pounds 15 shillings 6 pence, with far less risk.]

This expense of 167 pounds, however, is not far off the strict production cost as I envisioned it, excluding the overhead on the Jaggard premises, which must be added in if the Jaggards are to be numbered among the venturers, and the Folio is presumed to have been undertaken without subvention. Hard to imagine Blount, if we are to assume he alone absorbed the cost of production, paying for the printing before it was done (although we may concede his initial investment in paper and ink), the upkeep of Jaggard’s shop for two or three years during completion of his work on the Folio, requiring a considerable income. Blayney suggests that Aspley and Smethwick “had chosen to become shareholders in the venture rather than to lease or sell their rights” (p17), rights which otherwise might have cost Blount a mere 12 pounds to procure. This implies they may have bargained a better rate for their copyrights, in shares (*ie*, costs Blount would gratefully not have had to pay out up front), while not necessarily presenting a source for additional capital. Yet even as a company of booksellers formed to absorb the costs of the enterprise, it remains difficult to imagine rank businessmen paying for the product before it was completed. Which leaves the question, how did the Jaggard firm survive such a massive undertaking? This of course, is particularly critical in light of intimations that the firm had not been financially sound for some years.

R. Crompton Rhodes concedes that because of Jaggard's alleged complicity in the apparently suppressed Pavier collection of ten Shakespeare plays issued surreptitiously in 1619, he might be "the most unlikely printer whom Heminge and Condell would approach" to produce the Folio (*op cit*, p33). He further points out that the solitary reason generally offered for his involvement – "close personal relations with the playhouse managers" from the monopoly he held for printing playbills (assigned from James Roberts, 1615, along with the monopoly to print official documents of the city) – might be negated by a reported letters patent grant of an expanded playbill monopoly to Roger Wood and Thomas Symcock in 1620, by King James himself (although the original monopoly appears to have been assigned by Isaac Jaggard's widow in 1627, to Thomas Coates, along with her right to the Shakespeare folio).

The resources of the Jaggard firm were further strained during the years 1622 and 1623 by the remarkable production of at least four other large volumes: *A Christian Dictionary* by Thomas Wilson (third edition): 1622, William Jaggard imprint; *A Discoverie of Errours in the First Edition of the Catalogue of Nobility Pvblished by Ralph Brooke, Yorke Herald, 1619*, by Avgvstine Vincent, Rouge-croix Pursuiuant of Armes: 1622, William Jaggard imprint [folio, registered 29 October 1621; including a prefatory assault on Brooke by William Jaggard]; *The Description of Leicester Shire* by William Burton: 1622 [produced, according to Blayney, July through October 1622];

The Theater of Honour and Knight-hood or A Compendious Chronicle and Historie of the Whole Christian World Written in French by Andrew Favine, Parisian: 1623 [English translation in folio]. Apart from the possibility that *A Discoverie of Errours* may have been completed late 1621 (judging from its date of entry in the register), a satisfactory explanation for the substantial productivity of the shop (which must at least have continued also to produce city documents as required throughout this period, if not playbills as well) remains to be advanced for these critical two years.

Hinman's discovery that the Folio was composed by at least five compositors (two of whom were almost certainly resident, judging from similar settings in earlier Jaggard productions), followed by subsequent refinements in the theory which extend the number to nine, argues either for a larger shop or the recruitment of supplementary employees for the Folio (all nine not presumed to have laboured at the task simultaneously). Greater study is required to determine the degree to which these contingencies may have affected the cost of production (time saved in accelerated composition, for instance, not necessarily translating into a saving in expense, if unaccommodated on the press), since they might as reasonably imply an infusion of aristocratic means, as a determination to compress production to save costs (or both). A second press in-house is not out of the question, with a more remote contingency being the shop at 7 Fleet St (at "the Signe of the Hande & Starre") of John Jaggard,

William's "more reputable" brother (who held the monopoly for printing law books and had been chosen an Assistant, or permanent officer of the Stationers' Company, in 1612) – a shop active from 1594 through 1648, according to Captain William Jaggard in his lecture *Shakespeare Once a Printer and Bookman*, 1933.

My projection of production costs for the folio, assuming the use of a single press, includes:

A OUTSTANDING COPYRIGHT to the fourteen previously printed plays not controlled by Aspley and Smethwick (28 pounds at 2 pounds per play, paid out to ten different stationers). Pollard allowing that "Two pounds is said to have been the market price for a popular pamphlet, though Greene or Nash may have obtained double this" *op cit*, pp24/5; and that "The selling value of a play must have been much the same as that of a pamphlet" *op cit*, p36; and Chambers concurring "The fee for a pamphlet – and a play would rank as no more – is said to have been about two pounds." *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 1930, VOL 1, p149.

B LICENCE TO PRINT the sixteen unprinted plays (8 shillings at 6d per play). Here, Blayney, having recourse to records, emends this reasonable expectation to 7 shillings, by revealing that two of those plays, *As You Like It* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, were unexpectedly discovered by the clerk of the Stationers' Register, to be reversions of Blount and Jaggard, thereby requiring no fees.

C EDITORIAL AND DEDICATORY contributions (8 pounds 10 shillings). According to D. Nichol Smith's chapter 'Authors and Patrons' in *Shakespeare's England*, VOL 11, pp182–211, an author might expect from two to ten shillings to two to three pounds as a reward for dedicating his own work to a Lord. Henslowe records a payment of two pounds to Jonson for additions to *Jeronymo* (25 September 1601) and at least ten pounds more for further additions together with an advance against a book, *Richard Crookback* (22 June 1602). Based on this dubious index (insofar as it obtains here), I submit a computation of payments to the six dedicatory writers at three pounds to Ben Jonson, two each to John Heminge and Henry Condell, and ten shillings each to Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges, and James Mabbe.

D PAPER, at four shillings per ream (48 pounds, for 500 copies). The ream comprising 480 sheets, with the Folio [908 pages amounting to 454 leaves or 227 sheets per copy] requiring 113,500 sheets [14" × 18"] before spoilage, or something closer to 125,000 sheets all told [for 500 copies]. Vivian Salmon, examining the cost of printing Joseph Webbe's proposed dictionary of clauses to Terence, late 1628, in an essay in *The Library* VOL xv, pp190–6, entitled 'An Ambitious Printing Project of the Early Seventeenth Century', reports cost projections recorded in letters from Webbe to Samuel Hartlib, based on two books he published in 1627. He gives the cost of paper as 4s per ream (480 sheets), and further allows the printers two quires

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(48 sheets) per ream “to perfect the ream” [*ie*, wastage]. Thus the cost of ten sheets per penny. Also given in the paper is the figure of 5s for printing a ream, which roughly (at 125,000 sheets) works out to 65 pounds, projecting an aggregate cost in paper and printing for the Folio, using this index, of 113 pounds.

E FOUR PRESS EMPLOYEES (22 pounds 10 shillings per year – the work year computed, for convenience, at 300 days – or something between 45 and 67 pounds 10 shillings for the two to three years it took to produce). According to George Unwin in his essay ‘Commerce and Coinage’ in *Shakespeare’s England*, VOL 1, pp311–45, an annual wage for skilled craftsmen in 1588 was between 3£ 6s 8d and 6£ 13s 4d (or from 6d to 9d per day, “with meat and drink”, p331). This roughly reflects the statute of 1514 which fixed hours of labour mid-March to mid-September (for men) at 5 AM to 7 or 8 PM with half an hour off for breakfast and an hour and a half free for dinner and rest [*ie*, 12 to 13 hours per day]; and set the common labourer’s wage at 3d per day for half the year and 4d per day the other half, and the skilled artisan’s wage at 6d per day for half the year and 5d per day the other half. The labour calculation for the Folio is based on a crew of four besides Jaggard: printer’s apprentice; compositor; proofreader; and printer’s devil; considering two of Jaggard’s employees skilled enough to receive the higher wage [supported by Pollard’s previously cited projection for printing a quarto play in a month, requiring printer, journeyman and “a fairly advanced

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apprentice”; the average of six men per press employed by Christopher Plantin; and Stradanus’s depiction of an Antwerp printshop, *ca* 1600, employing two presses and ten employees: paper carrier; three compositors – one (perhaps an author) proofing a chase; proofreader; foreman; two printers; printer’s devil; and accountant].

F INK (undetermined).

Roughly 130 to 152 pounds in fees, materials and labour. This amount, however, does not take into account the markup or profit of the printer (an additional 50% above expenses, claims Blayney, pushing the putative publishers’ cost somewhere between 195 & 228 pounds).

W.W.Greg, in the source for my preceding extract of dramatic folios, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration* (1957), commenting on the confusion of Jonson’s posthumous collections, leaned unequivocally toward this recognition of prohibitive cost for folio production: “It appears that before his death in 1637 Jonson entrusted a number of his unprinted works to Sir Kenelm Digby [son of one of the Gunpowder conspirators] with a view to publication. These papers Digby [in France from 1636 through 1639] sold for forty pounds to Walkley, who caused them to be printed at a cost of two or three hundred: he had no press of his own.” [VOL III, p1081 – the Walkley folio, as described above, comprising a mere 290 leaves].

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Curious, if it was the players, under the nominal direction of Heminge and Condell, who undertook to see Shakespeare's plays memorialized, providing the texts from which the Folio was printed, that so many of the plays included had never apparently been previously played: "Of the thirty-six plays published in the First Folio, twenty had never before been printed, and most of the twenty had never been produced on any stage." Dorothy & Charlton Ogburn, *This Star of England*, 1952, p1243.

More enigmatic is the exclusion of four plays previously published under Shakespeare's name or initials, whose original title-pages bear witness to their familiarity to the company:

The True Chronicle Historie of the whole life and death of Thomas Lord Cromwell. As it hath beene sundrie times publikey acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants. Written by W.S. Imprinted at London for William Iones...1602 (reprinted 1613).

London Prodigall, As it was plaide by the Kings Maiesties Seruants. By VVilliam Shakespeare. London: Printed by T.C. for Nathaniel Butter...1605.

A Yorkshire Tragedy. Not So New as Lamentable and True. Acted by His Maiesties Players at the Globe. Written by W.Shakespeare. London: Printed by R.B. for Thomas Pauier, 1608 (reprinted 1619 by Jaggard as part of the contentious Pavier collection – thereby reviving the matter, if the play had ceased to be performed in the interim, for ready recollection in the Folio).

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The Late and Much Admired Play, Called Pericles, Prince of Tyre. With the True Relation of the Whole Historie, Aduentures, and Fortunes of the Said Prince: As Also, The No Lesse Strange, and Worthy Accidents, in the Birth and Life of His Daughter Mariana. As It Hath Been Diuers and Sundry Times Acted by His Maiesties Seruants, at the Globe on the Banck-side. By William Shakespeare. Imprinted at London for Henry Gosson...1609 (reprinted 1611; and 1619 by Jaggard as another of the spurious Pavier quartos).

These plays, together with three others not included in the First and Second Folios, were added by Philip Chetwinde to the Third Folio, 1663:

The Tragedy of Locrine, originally issued in 1595 under the initials W. S.

Sir John Oldcastle Lord Cobham, originally issued anonymously in 1600 (reprinted as another of the Pavier quartos of 1619 – with a spurious date of 1600 – under Shakespeare's name).

The Puritan Widow, originally issued as *The Pvritaine, Or the Widdow of Watling-streete.* Acted by the Children of Paules. Written by W.S....1607 (with running-heads titled "The Pvritaine Widdow").

If the Herberts directed publication of Jonson's folio, their reason for proceeding with publication of a complementary folio of Shakespeare's plays, likely had as much to do with the

reason for producing the antecedent volume, as with any quotidian event or isolated issue. It appears the Herbert faction, back perhaps into the 90s, harboured an intense determination to direct the sole medium of the day for influencing broad opinion, both public and private, working indomitably toward the ultimate preservation of these two predominant repositories of contemporary intellectual restivity, as the most conspicuous merits of, and sustaining justification for the theatre's development.

Yet the fact these books were issued as folios, demonstrates that the retrospective was expressly directed at the 'upper-crust', aimed at recalling the cardinal significance of a tenured peerage in a threatening age of determined dilution and contamination of effective aristocracy. The threat that Buckingham posed throughout the period of their publication, required little further aggravation from catalytic issues to excite an acceleration of seigniorial contempt (though I have no doubt the 'old guard' rose unhesitatingly to meet each new affront in policy and leaning with redoubled opposition).

It also bears remembering that the faction headed by the Herberts, Veres and Stanleys was comprised of the most conspicuous proponents of a cultured hegemony among the Tudor aristocracy (the Howards and Percys less conspicuous under their cloud of popery), as though they represented the front line of defence against philistine regressions (the Vere presence,

both in pre-eminence of nobility and cultural precocity, investing the cabal with its focal charge). It certainly cannot have escaped William Herbert that the title Pembroke preserved in homonym, the intimate association shared by Elizabeth (through her mother Anne Boleyn, created Marchioness of Penbroke in 1532) and Oxford, in his employment of the pseudonym Shake-speare: the 'pen-brook' and 'break-spear' alliance leading a veritable regal charge.

The Shakespeare folio seems almost certainly to have been intended to redress more than the obliviation of its author, offered up by its sponsors as the quintessential monument of an ancient dignity exemplified by that author – or perhaps more significantly, by the portraits he preserved – then very much under siege. The Spanish marriage crisis, in this light, conceivably exemplifying merely a further symptom, or elaboration, of the prevailing affliction confronting tenured nobility, rather than the fatal straw compelling the formidable rejoinder of... another folio. If the Spanish marriage crisis compelled its publication (as Peter Dickson contends), what prompted the same confederacy of 'beards' to reissue it in 1632 (replete with errors)?

An interpretation, I should add, which unmistakably permeates the enigmatic *roman-à-clef*, *De Vere, or the Man of Independence*, published anonymously in 1827, by the comparably enigmatic Robert Plumer Ward (who ascended, shortly after its publication, to the estimable dignity of sheriff of Herts, having taken

up residence a mere 13 miles from Hatfield House – greatest repository at that time, as we know, of the intimate record of both the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages – upon retirement from Parliament, in 1828). This novel leaves little doubt that the impression that Shakespeare's works were inextricably bound to the corrosive deterioration of a tenured nobility by the parvenu, was a substantiated survival of undeviating provenance and authority – at least in one inner keep of the cultural preserve – going back considerably further than the Georgian age.

My contention that Ward meant to ravel his readership in a *roman-à-clef*, is certainly not diluted by the coincidence of the narrator's name Beauclerk connected to Henry I (who was called Beauclerc), source of the Vere appointments as Lords Great Chamberlain (1106); and to Charles Beauclerk, natural son of Charles II and Nell Gwynn, who married Lady Diana Vere, eldest daughter and co-heir of Aubrey the last Vere Earl of Oxford; particularly apposed to the amplification of the Talbois estate, Elizabeth Talbois (as Ward recalls in chapter three), mother of another important natural son of royalty – *ie*, with regard to the Vere line: Henry Fitzroy, her son with Henry VIII, best friends with Oxford's famous uncle Henry Earl of Surrey, during the formative inception of a revolutionary poetic at the French Court which effectively gave rise to Shakespeare's sonnet. The name Beauclerk conveniently parenthesizes Oxford's line, signifying the beginning and the end of Vere titlements.

Not, that is, when the apparent coincidence is tied further along, by Elizabeth Talbois' maiden name, Blount, to "the famous Astleys", Blount's edition of Shakespeare's folio of 1623 appearing curiously the very year Sir John Astley was granted reversion of the office of Master of the Revels – which he directly proceeded to lease (at the persuasion of William Herbert) to Sir Henry Herbert, for 150 pounds per annum, thereby paving the way "for the final issuance of the First Folio, which had been on the presses for some time" [Ruth Loyd Miller, *op cit*, p15]. Recall that registration was the terminal hurdle to publication, which might prove ruinous to a contentious title, were imprimatur not granted: the Herbert fix was in!

And how salient that the theme of the novel – aristocratic contempt for the parvenu – is expressed by Edward de Vere (purportedly), as if to assert that the elaboration of the entire narrative comprises his very story: the parvenu symbolized in the history of the English aristocracy by the accession of James and his determination to dilute the nobility by drastically expanding their ranks – a fitting culmination to the headlong Macchiavellian ambition against which both Edward de Vere and Shakespeare are emphatically on record as opposing throughout the generation preceding.

Cecil's rise to the peerage in 1571 is certainly one of the most notable (and notorious) examples of the elevation of the parvenu: the explicit date, 1572, on the pedestal before the moat at Talbois (in the novel) bearing the invocation against the par-

venu – as well as against “Prince’s word...Prince’s minister... [and] woman’s smile” – being the earliest date after Edward de Vere’s forced marriage late 1571 (19 December) to a woman far beneath his station (and the ensuing transfer of his hereditary seat, to his father-in-law), that such a verse (if it referred to this heinous manipulation) could have been incised.

Not only is Ward clairvoyantly intimate enough with the history of the Veres to settle on ‘Beauclerk’ as the signal appellation of his narrator (‘Mortimer’, fittingly, the evanescent heir of an extinguished line), somehow he has managed to trace the shamble of one of the last bastions of *ancient* dignity in the realm – the disenfranchised seat of these ‘tragic last Veres’ at Talbois (ravaged by Edward de Vere’s fatal curse) – to the treachery of Cecil’s machinations – in an age when the fortunes of the Cecils, risen on the distinction of Marquesses, certainly wouldn’t *invite* such insolence – the downfall of the Vere nobility, albeit cryptically, retailed as the consequence of Burghley’s timely intrusion. An indelible old tale caught in the warp of aristocratic intimations, woven through the flimsy fabric of common appearances (each chapter pointedly prefaced with an epigrammatic verse from Shakespeare, with the exception of five from Milton, which may have been structured thus expressly to draw association to the senses, and direct attention to the impediment of blindness with regard to an appreciation of Shakespeare...in an *anonymous* book, that is, titled *De Vere*..!). Nor apparently a particularly difficult thread to follow, either – provided the facts – even then.

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